

# **HARPSWELL *BULLETIN***

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**News for Harpswell Residents and Property Owners from the Town Office – June 2004**

**Town Website: [www.curtislibrary.com/harpsgov.htm](http://www.curtislibrary.com/harpsgov.htm)**

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## **LIQUEFIED NATURAL GAS UPDATE**

At a Special Town Meeting on March 9, 2004, voters defeated a proposal for a Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) terminal at the former Fuel Depot site, now named the George J. Mitchell Field, in West Harpswell. Late last summer the Board of Selectmen was approached by representatives of two major companies, Transcanada Pipelines and Conoco Phillips, to consider leasing the Town-owned property for a LNG facility. Negotiations ensued for months with the vote being re-scheduled until such time as the Selectmen had a lease that they deemed in the best interest of the Town to take before the voters. The topic proved to be highly controversial and created significant divisions within the Town. Of the 3,449 voters who cast ballots, 56% voted in opposition to the lease agreement while 44% voted in favor. Over 2,000 votes were cast by absentee balloting—a record number for Harpswell.

## **REVALUATION**

Vision Appraisal Technology of Northboro, Massachusetts has been hired by the Town of Harpswell to begin a Townwide Revaluation Project. Vision Appraisal will be working with the Assessing Office to make the 16 month process a successful one. There are five major phases to a municipal revaluation: Data Collection, Market Analysis, Valuation, Field Review, and Informal Hearings. The following is a general outline and explanation of each phase of the project.

### **➤ PHASE 1: DATA COLLECTION**

The first phase will begin in late May 2004 and last for approximately 7 months. During this phase listers go to each property and physically inspect the interior and measure the exterior of each building. These listers note building location, size, age, quality of construction, improvements, topography, utilities, zoning restrictions, if any, and numerous other characteristics both inside and out. To ensure that a home was inspected, the homeowner is asked to sign the data collection form to verify that the inspection took place. The entire process takes approximately 15 minutes. All Vision Representatives will carry identification cards. Their cars will be appropriately identified and listed with both the Assessing Office and the Sheriff's Department.

### **➤ PHASE 2: MARKET ANALYSIS**

A variety of resources are used to analyze the real estate market. While the physical data is being collected by Vision listers, appraisal personnel will be analyzing recent sales that took place over the last few years to determine which market factors influenced property values. Vision Appraisal Technology will gather and use information from the Registry of Deeds, property managers, developers, and local real estate professionals. Once all the data is collected and reviewed for accuracy, the appraiser will determine land values and set Neighborhood Site Indexes, that rate the desirability of locations throughout the Town.

➤ **PHASE 3: VALUATION**

Valuation is done in accordance with market value. During this phase, individual characteristics of the building are analyzed using information gathered in both phase 1 and 2. Each property is compared to other comparable properties with similar characteristics. Then the market value of the improvements is added to the land value that was previously determined. This value is the final estimate for each parcel of property, building and land.

➤ **PHASE 4: FIELD REVIEW**

Field Review is the method of checking and re-checking both the values that have been determined and the data that has been collected. During this review, properties are viewed in the field by supervisory appraisers who double check uniformity and accuracy of information.

➤ **PHASE 5: INFORMAL HEARINGS**

Once the Field Review is completed a Notice of New Values will be mailed to each property owner. At this time, anyone with questions concerning the revaluation process or about the data collected on their property has an opportunity to meet with a member of Vision' s staff to discuss their property value.

After the five phases are completed, all information used in the revaluation is then turned over to the Assessing Office for final decisions by the Selectmen/Assessors. A feature of Harpswell's Revaluation Project is the installation of assessing software on the Town' s existing computer system. This will allow the Town to maintain the data collected during the revaluation on a continual basis. Questions about the revaluation project should be directed to the Assessing Office at 833-5771.

## **TOWN LANDS COMMITTEE**

Selectmen recently formed a committee with the following mission statement: The Town Lands Committee shall inventory all Town-owned property, including Town landings, and assess the current uses and management of such properties and shall make recommendations to the Selectmen with regard to policies, procedures and actions that should be taken to insure the public's access and appropriate uses of Town properties. The George J. Mitchell Field, formerly the Fuel Depot property, is one of a number of Town-owned properties that this Committee will evaluate and advise the Selectmen on. Members appointed to the Committee are Diane Gagne, Bernice Kenney, John Loyd, Don Miskill, Wallace Tobin and Bob Waddle.

## **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE**

On May 20, 2004 the Board of Selectmen chose to pursue a contract with the Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG) for assistance with updating the Town's 1993 Comprehensive Plan. GPCOG will be working closely with the Town Planner and the Comprehensive Plan Committee to continue the work that has already been underway for the past few years. Personnel from GPCOG will provide drafting and mapping assistance as well as offer expertise in land use planning. It is expected that the updated plan will be presented to voters at the 2005 Annual Town Meeting. In the meantime, the Comprehensive Plan Committee is planning several forums to give citizens an opportunity for input into this important document.

## **OLD TOWN HOUSE RESTORATION PROJECT**

The Harpswell Town House, originally the Meeting House, was built in 1757-59, and was used as the seat of Town government until the late 1980s. It is one of the few such buildings still intact in southern Maine and is on the National Register of Historic Places. The building requires repair, and the Town Meeting has voted to consider restoration of the building. The 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Town of Harpswell is 2008.

The Selectmen engaged Suzanne O. Carlson, Architect, to conduct a restoration feasibility study. (The full report is available for review at the Town Office). Certain measures appear to be urgently needed, and the Town has appropriated \$100,000 to begin the restoration. In her report, Ms. Carlson has proposed a scope of work that consists of an exterior phase with a projected budget of \$90,000 to \$100,000 and an interior phase with three stages. The estimated total cost of the repair and restoration is \$307,000 to \$353,000. If the decision were made to restore the building to its original condition in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century, additional work would be required at considerable added expense.

The Town is currently preparing a work plan and will issue requests for proposals for the most urgent repairs, primarily to the exterior—replacing the roof for example. Work is expected to begin by early summer.

## **CAPITAL ROADS PROJECT**

The Special Town Meeting of May 20, 2004 approved bonding \$600,000 for a capital roads project. The seven roads slated to be re-built within a 1-2 year time frame are: Aucocisco, Eggemoggin, Field, Pinkham Point, Stevens Corner, South Dyer's and Ocean Street. The Town plans to engage the services of its engineering firm, Woodard & Curran, for assistance with developing specifications that will be competitively bid. The Selectmen and the Road Commissioner will work closely to maintain cost controls and oversight of this major capital improvement project.

## **RECYCLING REVENUES**

The export market has helped raise the value of recycled commodities to a higher level. Metal and certain plastic prices have been especially good in recent months. Recycled paper products including newspapers, magazines, mixed paper and cardboard are doing very well, with sales of these commodities mostly to mills here in Maine and Canada. Prices are expected to remain strong throughout the summer and fall. Removing recyclable materials from household waste will make a big difference toward reducing waste disposal costs to the Town. Revenues can be much greater with the continued support of the citizens of Harpswell to ensure that this material is properly recycled and not discarded in the compactors.

## **MOUNTAIN ROAD WALKING PATH**

Selectmen have been authorized to allow volunteers to begin work on a walking path along the northeast side of Mountain Road. The Town owns approximately 50 feet on each side of the Mountain Road along the stretch from Route 24 to the Ewing Narrows Bridge with the exception of a few properties. Volunteers will work to clear a path, at no expense to the Town, utilizing volunteer labor and donated materials. This new path will provide additional recreational opportunities and may eventually connect with other trails on Town-owned properties.

## Reminders

- Dogs six months or older must be registered annually with the Town Clerk's Office.
- Moorings must be renewed annually with the Town—in addition to attaching the decal to your mooring, please paint the registration number on your mooring.
- The Town administers a DEP grant program to replace faulty oil tanks at little or no cost to residents. This program will end June 20, 2004. If you have an older tank that may be pitted, leaking or leaning, please contact the Codes Office for more information.
- For 911 purposes, please post your house number in a visible location on your home or at the end of your driveway if the house is further than 50 feet from the road so that emergency responders can locate your property quickly in the event of an emergency. Call Verizon at 1-800-870-9999 to correct or confirm your 911 address. Both of these measures are crucial to a resident's safety.

## **NEW ORDINANCE & SHORELAND ZONING AMENDMENT EFFECTIVE MAY 20, 2004**

**Ordinance:** The Town has banned (1) the use and/or application of any insect growth regulator that contains diflubenzuron (more commonly known as Dimilin) or tebufenozide; and (2) the aerial spraying (aerial means applied from an aircraft) of any insect growth regulator or insecticide whose product label indicates that it is harmful to aquatic invertebrates. For browntail moth control, homeowners can continue to use commercially available products except for contracting for the application of diflubenzuron or tebufenozide or contracting for the application by aircraft of any insecticide harmful to aquatic invertebrates.

<p><b><u>Amendment:</u></b> No chemical, sludge or manure fertilizer shall be applied within twenty-five (25) feet of the maximum high water line of a water body, tributary stream, or the upland edge of a wetland.</p>
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